

#### **4VAC15-20-152 (New)**

#### **Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Target shooting on department-owned lands.**

##### **Summary:**

The proposal is to expressly prohibit target shooting on department-owned and department-managed lands except on designated ranges.

##### **Proposed language of amendment:**

##### **4VAC15-20-152. Target shooting on department-owned lands**

It shall be unlawful to target shoot on any department-owned or department-managed lands, except at designated ranges. Target shooting is defined as the discharge of a firearm (as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2), muzzleloader (as defined in 4VAC15-50-71), or archery equipment (as defined in 4VAC15-40-20) for purposes other than hunting, trapping or self-defense. Nothing in this regulation will prohibit department employees in execution of their duties from training with department-issued firearms.

##### **Rationale:**

Due to their often remote locations, the Department's Wildlife Management Areas and other properties are often used as locations for target shooting. This practice is currently prohibited by posted rule except at designated ranges but not specifically under regulation, creating issues with awareness and enforceability.

Unauthorized target shooting presents a hazard to users upon and neighbors to Department properties as shooters may not be using a proper backstop nor have awareness of what might exist downrange. Further, other users may be unaware of shooting activity and inadvertently enter into the line of fire. This activity differs from authorized hunting in the volume of fire and the fact that target shooters are not firing from an elevated position as are many hunters on a WMA. Hunting seasons are well defined and WMA users have an expectation that hunting activity is occurring during those time frames. Use of blaze orange or pink is required during certain seasons and is generally encouraged to create greater awareness and margin of safety. Properly licensed hunters have completed a hunter education course that emphasizes positive target identification and an appropriate backstop. In 2020 incidents related to target shooting on WMAs resulted in damage to private property and imminent threats to human safety.